

THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

SECRET AND PERSONAL

April 6, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Post Mortem on Punta del Este

I have had an opportunity to read Mr. Belk's memorandum as well as the file of materials. I would wish to have the record expanded to be fully inclusive of the relevant materials. I do wish to make the following interim comments which do not emerge from the record thus far:

1. We should not exaggerate the character of the differences recorded at Punta del Este. There was unanimity on a forthright declaration about communist penetration in the hemisphere, support for the Alliance for Progress as the path to economic and social development, the basic incompatibility between the Marxist regime in Cuba and the Inter-American System, ~~and~~ the exclusion of Cuba from the Inter-American Defense Board, and the interruption of trade and traffic in arms between Cuba and other countries in the hemisphere.

2. On paragraph three of the exclusion resolution, the difference finally turned upon the two phrases: "this incompatibility excludes the participation" and "this incompatibility is contrary to the participation".

3. A point not underlined in the "Post Mortem" is that, on the day of the vote, the Argentine Foreign Minister had agreed to our language and we were not certain that he would abstain until about three hours before the votes were cast. The exclusion formula, as an alternative to diplomatic sanctions, had been based upon Argentine suggestions.

4. Unanimity was not possible on the basis of a further watering down of our position. It was quite clear that Columbia and the Central American group would have reacted violently and we were faced with the fact that we could lose the votes of the very

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E.O. 11652, Sec. 3(E) and 5(D) or (E)

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countries who considered themselves most threatened by Castro, including those who had cooperated with the unfortunate Bay of Pigs episode. We could not treat lightly the determined insistence of Guatemala and one or two others to walk out of the conference in such an event.

5. The Punta del Este resolutions served as something of a lightning-rod for internal tensions — including those in the United States. Frondizi, in my judgment, made a serious mistake in not treating the exclusion resolution as such a lightning rod for his own situation. In the result, he was forced to a breach of relations with Cuba and his obvious about face severely affected his personal prestige and authority in the Argentine.

6. In retrospect, I think it entirely probable that both Ambassador Morrison and Mr. Goodwin in their personal conversations left different impressions, and in opposite directions, about our real position. I refer to Ambassador Morrison's conversations around the OAS and impressions which I gather Mr. Goodwin left in his visit to Latin America prior to Punta del Este.

7. I do not accept the notion that our attitude at Punta del Este was the result of any severe Congressional pressure. The Congressional delegation obviously wanted as strong a set of resolutions as could be reasonably obtained but they understood the problems, and despite some indiscreet personal remarks in the corridors, cooperated loyally in moving as far as we did on many points in the interest of hemispheric cohesion.

Let me conclude by saying that it is not my view that we were without a policy or a position and that had the results of Punta del Este been any less forthright tensions inside the United States about Cuba would have continued to build up rapidly, and might now be giving us far more serious trouble than is presently the case.

8. There are certain lessons to be derived from the Punta del Este experience but I shall point them out after a more thorough assembling of the facts.

*Dean Rusk*  
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